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Lake County Forest Preserve officials are still willing to negotiate the creation of a new flood-control reservoir in the Buffalo Creek Forest Preserve.

Although the proposed intergovernmental project has been suspended due to cost concerns, Forest Board President Bonnie Thomson Carter said Thursday the district is still open to discussions with the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago to move the project forward.

Under an intergovernmental agreement approved by the Lake County Forest Board in 2006, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago was to construct a natural-looking 30-acre stormwater reservoir in the Buffalo Creek Preserve near Buffalo Grove.

The reservoir would be designed to help prevent Des Plaines River flooding in Cook County.

In return, the water reclamation district was to give the forest district \$1.8 million for future land purchases and finance more than \$8 million in improvements at the 387-acre preserve near the county's southern border.

The improvements funded by the water reclamation district were to include a new looped trail system around the reservoir, an extensive wetlands and prairie restoration project, two new picnic shelters, a man-made heron rookery and expanded parking and restroom facilities.

Carter said she is willing to ask the Forest Board to approve sharing the cost of wetland mitigation for the project with the Water Reclamation District if it will help revive the effort.

"I'm willing to go to the board with this. To me it's not a deal-breaker," she said of the wetland

mitigation costs.

Carter was responding to concerns raised by U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk, R-Highland Park, and officials in Cook County that the project, designed to create more flood water storage to help prevent flooding along the Des Plaines River south of Lake County, has been stalled.

Carter said she is disappointed that the breakdown of the project has been attributed to the cost of aesthetic aspects required by the forest district.

She said that while officials do not want to see a reservoir that looks like "a big bathtub," the main reason cost estimates for the project have risen to about \$40 million is the increase in construction costs, including oil and steel, since the project was initially moved forward.

Problems gaining state and federal approval for the project have contributed to the delays. The water district is now exploring an alternate site in Wheeling, but Kirk said he still believes the Buffalo Creek site is the best solution.

"Should Wheeling provide a suitable and cost-efficient option, we can still reap the flood control benefits that Buffalo Creek would have provided. But surely a consensus agreement can be reached regarding Buffalo Creek," Kirk said in a letter to the forest and water districts.

Kirk said that according to the Army Corps of Engineers, flooding along the Des Plaines River causes more than \$25 million in damage each year to homes, businesses and transportation infrastructure.

"With severe floods occurring annually, we must come together to implement mutually beneficial solutions to protect the 33 communities along the river," Kirk said. "The time to prepare for a flood is before rain starts to fall."